Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Freed Bonded Labourers and non SC/STs living below the poverty line in rural areas.

**Credit to Small and Medium Enterprises**

1402. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the provisions of the recent policy package for stepping up credit to Small and Medium Enterprises sector enforceable;

(b) whether the said provisions are applicable for private sector banks too;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) what steps are being taken to bring the private banks under the purview of the policy packages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The provisions of the recent policy package on stepping up credit to SME sector are enforceable by Reserve Bank of India. However, the one time settlement scheme for small scale non performing accounts (NPA) announced under the policy package is applicable to public sector banks only.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

**Joint Study Group with Russia**

1403. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in an attempt to further strengthen relationship, India and Russia will set up a joint study group to explore possibilities of a comprehensive economic co-operation agreement;

(b) if so, whether while identifying banking and technology sectors as drivers of bilateral relationship with Russia, there was a need to ensure that issues of business visas did not hamper growth;

(c) whether bilateral trade between India and Russia stands at $3.15 billion and is not commensurate with level of political engagements between the two countries; and

(d) if so, what are the other steps considered to be taken to strengthen economic ties?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir. A proposal to set up a Joint Study Group is under consideration.

(b) No sector have been specifically identified yet.

(c) Indo-Russia bilateral trade in the last two financial years are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 2003-04 | USD 1673.39 million |
| 2004-05 | USD 1862.81 million |

There is scope for further strengthening of trade ties.

(d) Promotion of dialogue at the highest level, constant review through the Joint Commission/Working Group/Sub-Group mechanism, Joint Task Force, promoting direct business contacts through exchange of delegations, Joint Business Councils are some of the initiatives that are being considered to strengthen economic ties.

**Amendment of IRDA Act**

1404. SHRIMATI JAMANA DEVI BARUPAL:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a high power panel under Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) has recommended for reaching reforms in insurance sector, including a different capital requirement for health and farm insurers; '

(b) if so, whether a full report of IRDA panel head by K.P. Narasimhan has suggested that section 6 of Insurance Act of 1956 needs to be amended for providing different levels of capital for certain classes of business such as agriculture and health insurance;

(c) if so, the main features of the report; and